

Searching the Web More Efficiently

Ms. Greta E. Marlatt



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Getting Started

Have a strategy in mind before you begin

- **What do you need to do?**
 - Find specific information?
 - Find everything available on your subject?
- **What are the keywords for your topic?**
- **Are there unique words, names or acronyms related to your topic?**
- **Are there specific organizations or groups that would have useful information on their pages?**
- **Are there specific phrases that would help?**
- **Are there helpful synonyms or spelling variations?**
- **Are there common words you can avoid?**
- **Are there irrelevant words or phrases that you could exclude?**



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Internet Search Tools

Types

- **Search Engines**
 - Use software programs known as robots, spiders or crawlers to search the web and build a database of sites. Useful for narrow, well-defined search of many web sites.
- **Meta-Search Engines**
 - Use a single interface to provide simultaneous searching of the most popular search engines. Good for a broad, fast search.
- **Directories or Catalogs**
 - These are hand picked pages, usually annotated and classified or arranged by subject. Ideal for broad category searches
- **Deep or Invisible Web**
 - This is the searchable contents of databases and is generally not found through search engines or directories

<http://library.nps.navy.mil/home/netsearch.htm>



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Internet Search Tools

Specialized Search Engines

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<http://politicalinformation.com>

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<http://www.science.gov>



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Search Techniques

Boolean

Boolean Searching identifies documents based on multiple criteria and is useful for expanding or narrowing the search criteria. It is a standard command interface in many databases.

- **AND (+) [narrows the search]**
 - peacekeeping AND security AND Kosovo
 - +vietnam +casualty +statistics
- **OR [expands the search] useful for synonyms or spelling variations**
 - (women OR females) AND combat
 - (al qaeda OR al quida) AND terrorism
 - “cold fusion energy” OR “hydrogen energy”
- **AND NOT (-) [limits the search]**
 - anthrax AND NOT “heavy metal”
 - terrorism -nuclear



Search Techniques

Phrase and Truncation

Phrase Searching guarantees that a string of words will appear together and in the order typed. Most search engines require quotation marks (“ ”) or it is a search menu option.

Truncation looks for multiple forms of a word. If available, most search engines use an asterisk (*) at the root of the word (e.g. terror* -- terrorist, terrorists, terrorism, terrorizing).



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Search Techniques

Field Searching

Title field

This is the text you can read in the blue bar at the top of the browser window (not the main headline on the webpage itself). The title ***normally*** contains important keywords referring to the content of the page. By restricting your search to the page titles, you will get fewer, but more focused hits.

URL field

This is the address of a page. Restricting your search to addresses that contain a certain word is another way of narrowing a search. This is useful if a file name is part of the URL.





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with **all** of the words

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with the **exact phrase**

weapons of mass destruction

with **at least one** of the words

without the words

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any language

File Format

return results of the file format

any format

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anytime

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Return results where my terms occur

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Search Tips

- **Know your search tool**
 - Study the instructions, understand the defaults
 - Take advantage of “query by example” or “find other similar sites”
 - Use the “advanced” or “power” search option
 - Resources and search engines change - keep current





Advanced Search

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Find results

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with the **exact phrase**
with **at least one** of the words
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Search Tips

- **Know your search tool**
 - Study the instructions, understand the defaults
 - Take advantage of “query by example” or “find other similar sites”
 - Use the “advanced” or “power” search option
 - Resources and search engines change - keep current
- **Know your subject**
 - Well defined query, precise terminology
 - Put the most important words/terms first
 - Be specific
 - Avoid common words unless they are part of a phrase
- **Think about the most logical place to find the information**
 - Consider what tool would provide the best answer
 - Search engines are not always the best solution
 - Portals, guides or directories



Search Tips

- **Use the site map or site search capability**
 - Look around the site to see if there is other useful information
 - Use the search functions of directories
- **Try field or domain specific searches rather than searching the whole document**
 - More relevant
 - More specific



Search Tips

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 - More relevant
 - More specific
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Greta E. Marlatt

With thanks to Candice Boerlage and Glen Koué

September 2003

Revised and Updated version of original by George Goncalves and Greta Marlatt, November 1996



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Search Tips

- **Decide how much time you can afford to spend before you start**
 - Is your search efficient
 - Is it in the right place
 - When do you give in and ask
- **Search the Invisible web**
 - Databases
 - Specific document types [PDF, powerpoint, word etc]
 - Non-print materials [image, audio, video etc.]



“Deep” or “Invisible” Web

★ What is in it?

- “Stuff” that search engines can’t or won’t search
- Dynamically generated pages [cgi, asp, cfm, URL with ?]
- Web accessible databases that require information be typed in
- Certain file formats [e.g. PDF, images, streaming media, etc]
- A lot of the real time data [stock quotes, weather, sports scores, election results etc]
- Commercial resources with domain or IP limitations
- Information residing on an Intranet
- Archives [newspapers]

★ How big is it?

- 400-550 times larger than the surface web
- 7,500 terabytes vs. 19 terabytes

http://www.brightplanet.com/deepcontent/deep_web_faq.asp#DeepWebSize



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Why Use The Deep Web?

- ★ **Quality of content/higher level of authority**
- ★ **Comprehensiveness**
- ★ **Focused**
- ★ **Timeliness**
- ★ **The material isn't available elsewhere on the Web**



When To Use The Deep Web

- ★ **Standard search engines aren't working**
- ★ **A precise answer is needed**
- ★ **Data or statistics are needed**
- ★ **High quality or authoritative results are needed**
- ★ **When timeliness is important**
- ★ **You know the subject area well**
- ★ **Looking for collections [images, sounds, manuscripts etc.]**
- ★ **Reference books online [handbooks, guides, dictionaries, encyclopedias etc.]**



Strategies for Searching The Deep Web

- ★ **Have the mindset of a hunter, detective or passionate collector**
- ★ **Use search engines to get to the front door**
 - ★ **“searchable database”**
 - ★ **“interactive database”**
- ★ **Use the site map to see if databases or statistics are mentioned**
- ★ **Use the site’s internal search tool and search for “database”**
- ★ **Check subject specific discussion groups**



Evaluating Information on the Internet



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The World Wide Web

■ **Who is the author or institution? [AUTHORITY]**

Evaluation Guidelines

- does it include author's bio or information about the institution?
- what is the source's authority, can they be contacted, are they reputable?
- a tilde (~) may indicate a personal page
- check the domain section of the URL
 - .com (commercial) - may be trying to sell a product
 - .edu (educational) -- can be serious research or just student class assignments
 - .gov (government) -- usually dependable
 - .mil (military) -- usually dependable
 - .net (network) -- may provide services to customers
 - .org (organization) -- nonprofit institution, may be biased



The World Wide Web

Evaluation Guidelines

- **How current is the information? [TIMELINESS]**
 - is there a date of when the page was created or last update?
 - is some of the information obviously out of date?
 - do the links work?

- **Is the content accurate and objective? [ACCURACY]**
 - are there biases (political, cultural, religious or institutional)?
 - is the organization reputable?
 - can the facts be checked/verified?
 - if the information has been copied from other sources is this acknowledged?
 - what do others say about the author or organization?



The World Wide Web

Evaluation Guidelines

- **Who is the audience and what is the purpose of the information? [PURPOSE]**
 - is the page intended for the general public or for a specific group (e.g. scholars or children etc.)?
 - is the purpose to inform, explain, persuade, sell a product or advocate a cause?
 - is the purpose clearly stated?
 - what's the tone of the page? [serious? humorous? parody?]
- **How comprehensive is the information? [SCOPE]**

Make Yourself Think Critically
Don't Take the Easy Way Out



Questions?



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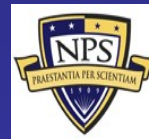


Exercises

- **Begin at the Library's Web Finding Tools page -**
<http://library.nps.navy.mil/home/netsearch.htm>

SEARCH ENGINES

- Try the following some of the following searches in
- Google, AlltheWeb, Ask and HotBot
 - Keywords and phrases in quotes
 - *nuclear terrorism [with and without quotes] Iraq*
 - Search within a site
 - *Site:.gov "nuclear terrorism"*
 - Search for a specific file format
 - *filetype:.pdf "nuclear terrorism"*



Exercises (2)

META SEARCH ENGINES

- Try searching **cold fusion** in the following Meta Search Engines
 - Dogpile
 - Excite
 - ProFusion

DIRECTORIES

- Try searching **computer security** in the following Directories [under the Webliographies section]
 - Infomine
 - Librarian's Index to the Internet
 - Science.gov



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Exercises (3)

Invisible/Deep Web

- Try searching ***inflation calculator*** in the following sites
 - Complete Planet
 - Incy Wincy

